



February 2017

## Start Dabbling in Native Plants!

Most of the landscape plants in our area are relative newcomers (or transplants!) to the Southeast Louisiana area. By and far most are originally from Asia, including most of our iconic favorites like camellias and azaleas. Add boxwoods, ligustrum, crepe myrtle, and yews to the mix and you'll begin to realize that most of our landscape is foreign.

Adding native plants to a landscape is a great way to jazz things up and help to take your garden to the next level. Native plants are adapted to our climate and require little care, spraying, or fussing in most cases. The largest benefit of using native plants in the landscape is the many resources they provide to local wildlife.

Most songbirds feed on insects local to this area. Those insect species appear in more abundant numbers on native trees and plants than they do on our imported species. Going native helps to feed the birds. Additionally, native plants provide more seed than non-native species. Many native flowers are excellent nectar plants and may even serve

as a host plant for a native species of butterfly.



American Beautyberry *Callicarpa americana*



Colorful berries on the American Beautyberry.

One of the biggest complaints I overhear about using native plants is an unkempt appearance when the plants are dormant. Resist the urge to trim them back, many species need to drop seed to re-generate. Additionally, the seed crop feeds the birds and provides shelter for wildlife and insects during the cooler months.

Several nurseries and the Pelican Greenhouse sale offer plant material if you are interested in adding some natives to your yard. Online suppliers of seed and seed mixes can be a good affordable way to add some new species as well.

Below are my top ten favorite (and easy!) native plants to use in a landscape:

**American Beautyberry- (*Callicarpa americana*)** Excellent food plant for birds and attractive in the fall

landscape. Low maintenance,

good woody perennial. (Continued)

## Start Dabbling in Native Plants! (Continued)

**Milkweed** *Asclepias tuberosa* - Host plant for the Monarch butterfly as well as a pretty orange-yellow flower. Plant some behind your bedding plants for an attractive and useful backdrop. Be sure to avoid tropical milkweeds if possible.

**Swamp Sunflower** *Helianthus agustifolius* - This beautiful perennial sunflower feeds the birds as well as creates a beautiful display. Plant it along a fence and enjoy it for years. Be sure to place it in an area where it can reach its full height and spread.

**Cardinal Flower** *Lobelia cardinalis* - I am excited to see this colorful little wildflower offered at even some of the larger nurseries. The bright red flowers attract hummingbirds and this is an excellent plant for those shaded wet areas in the garden.

**Autumn Sage** *Salvia greggii* - Native to the West part of the state and Texas, salvias are excellent pollinator plants and have been hybridized to come in a variety of sizes and shapes. They will re-sow themselves and may be cut back when they finish their cycle.

**Louisiana Iris** (several species) - Excellent flowers for boggy or wet spots, they also may adapt to a traditional garden bed site in some cases. Louisiana irises flower in the spring and come in purple, copper, white, yellow, and many hybridized colors.

**Wild Ageratum or Blue Mist Flower** *Conoclinium coelestinum* - This is another beautiful wildflower that provides insect habitat and plenty of pollen and nectar. Easy to grow, this plant makes a beautiful display each summer and early fall. Very easy to grow.

**Indian Blanket** *Gaillardia pulchella* - This is another prolific wildflower that is an awesome pollinator plant. Widely available at nurseries, Indian Blanket is also very drought and heat tolerant.

**Black Eyed Susan** *Rudbeckia hirta* - A biennial that takes the summer sun and heat well, I'd like to see this plant used more in flower beds. This common wildflower provides food for the bees and hummingbirds and a pop of color in your garden.

**Lyre-Leafed Sage** *Salvia lyrata* - I've been seeing this plant in nursery trade for a few years now, and think it is an excellent perennial ground cover or fill plant. Most of the year it is a colorful purplish ground cover, and several times a year it sends up a flower spike with blue flowers. A great native for high traffic areas or bare spots, it takes the sun and the shade equally well. ~Anna Timmerman



Swamp Sunflower *Helianthus agustifolius*



Indian Blanket *Gaillardia pulchella*



Lyre-Leafed Sage *Salvia lyrata*

# Orleans Parish Welcomes New Agent

We would like to welcome our new Extension Agent, Dr. Joe Willis. Joe began January 15<sup>th</sup> as the Horticulture Extension Agent for Orleans Parish with some responsibilities in Plaquemine Parish and, like all of our agents, will be working across parish lines with surrounding agents.

Joe grew up on a farm in rural North Carolina with his parents and five siblings. He got his B.S. in Botany from North Carolina State University, then packed up and moved cross country to get his Ph.D. in Plant Pathology from the University of California, Riverside. This is also where he met his wife, Paula, a product of LSU who was getting her Ph.D. in plant pathology as well.

Dr. Willis began his career as a molecular geneticist for Enichem Americas in Princeton, New Jersey but stepped away from the lab bench and into the field when Enichem Americas closed and he became the Plant Health Manager for Princeton Nurseries. Joe most recently served as horticulturist for Suzanne

Turner of Suzanne Turner Associates (a prominent landscape architecture firm in Baton Rouge).

Joe and his wife, Paula, had a weekly radio spot in New Jersey dispensing timely gardening tips and answering questions. He has also worked with local

and national TV (including Joe Lampl), especially during his stint with Terracycle, highlighting smart healthy horticultural practices.

When they moved to Baton Rouge in 2010 Joe instantly felt at home (but he still has a lot of trouble with pronunciations). Though Joe's love for plants and gardening means that is one of his hobbies as well as his vocation, he also has outside interests in beekeeping, fitness training, dog training, construc-

tion, shooting, and music. Involvement in his community has taken several routes such as serving as deacon in his church.

If you see Joe, say hello and spend a few minutes talking. He loves making new friends.



~Bienvenue a La Nouvelle Orléans Dr. Joe~

# February Vegetable Planting Guide

| Crop                | Recommended Variety                                                                       | Planting Depth | Spacing Inches | Days Until Harvest<br>* from transplant date |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Beets               | Detroit Dark Red, Kestrel, Red Ace F1, Ruby Queen                                         | ¼ inch         | 2-4            | 55-60                                        |
| Sweet Corn          | Merit, Silver Queen, Honey 'n Pearl, Ambrosia                                             | ½ inch         | 10-12          | 69-92                                        |
| Eggplants (seed)    | Dusky, Epic, Night Shadow, Black Beauty                                                   | ⅝ inch         | --             | 140                                          |
| Hot Peppers (seed)  | Grande, Tula, Mariachi, Mitla,                                                            | ⅝ inch         | --             | 140                                          |
| Bell Peppers (seed) | Aristotle XR3, Jupiter, King Arthur, Paladin, Golden Summer, Purple Beauty, Tequila       | ⅝ inch         | --             | 140-150                                      |
| Irish Potatoes      | Dark Red Norland, Red LaSoda, Kennebec, Yukon Gold,                                       | 4 inches       | 12             | 90-120                                       |
| Tomato (seed)       | Better Boy, Big Beef, Cupid, Pink Girl, Juliet, Sweet Milton, Bella Rosa, Carolina Gold   | ⅝ inch         | --             | 100-115                                      |
| Kale                | None Given                                                                                | ½ inch         | 12-18          | 50                                           |
| Kohlrabi            | Early Purple Vienna, Early White, Vienna, Winner                                          | ⅝ inch         | 6              | 55-75                                        |
| Mustard Greens      | Florida Broadleaf, Greenwave, Red Giant, Southern Giant Curled, Savannah, Tendergreen     | ⅝ inch         | 4-6            | 35-50                                        |
| Radishes            | Cherriette, Champion, White Icicle, April Cross                                           | ⅝ inch         | 1              | 22-28                                        |
| Shallots            | Matador, Prism                                                                            | 1 inch         | 4-8            | 50                                           |
| Swiss Chard         | None Given                                                                                | ¼ inch         | 6-8            | 45-55                                        |
| Turnip Greens       | Alamo, All Top, Purple, Top White Globe, Seven Top, Southern Green, Top Star, Tokyo Cross | ⅝ inch         | 2-6            | 40-50                                        |



Soil Test Kits come in pre-addressed mailing boxes.

Now is the perfect time to determine the condition of your soil before planting spring gardens or flowers. The condition and type of soil in which you garden has a profound effect on the health and growth of your plants. The basic soil test will tell you the current nutrient levels in the soil as well as the pH. With this information, the lab will provide recommendations on supplemental fertilization and amendments to adjust the pH for the desired plants. Lack of this knowledge can lead to poor results or even over application of fertilizer which could lead to environmental problems such as polluting groundwater. Soil test kits may be picked up at our offices or at several locations throughout the area. For a list of locations, follow this link: [Test Kit Locations](#).



# The HERB SOCIETY of AMERICA

## GreenBridges™ Initiative

The GreenBridges™ program, created by the Herb Society of America, helps to create opportunities for the safe passage of plants and pollinators and to avoid habitat fragmentation. Each GreenBridges™ garden is a link in the chain across the nation, providing safe movement for the plants and pollinators that help maintain healthy ecosystems. To this end, the Herb Society awards GreenBridges™ certificates to gardeners who work to create these conducive habitats.

GreenBridges™ certificates were recently awarded to two New Orleans organizations for their efforts on behalf of our natural habitat by replacing trees lost to hurricane Katrina. On behalf of The Herb Society of America the New Orleans Chapter presented the certificates to Parkway Partners and NOLA Tree Project. Accepting the awards were Jean Fahr from Parkway Partners and Connie Uddo from the NOLA Tree Project. The awards were presented by Anne Barnes and Anne Abbott who are both board members of the New Orleans chapter of the Herb Society and Master Gardeners of Greater New Orleans. Anne Barnes herself has recently received the certification for her garden in uptown New Orleans. Anne Abbott, who has been on the GreenBridges™ committee since its inception, will also soon be receiving a certificate for her North Carolina garden.

For information on this wonderful initiative and to get your garden certified click the following link:

[GreenBridges](#)



Pictured: Jean Fahr, Anne Abbott, Jim Letelle, Anne Barnes, and Connie Uddo.

# Pruning After a Hard Freeze

After the last hard freeze, many gardens in the area look a bit rough. Many tropicals are now brown mushy piles, and everything looks a bit scorched. Some of these things can be addressed now, but for others it is better to wait on the pruning to prevent further damage if another freeze event occurs.

It is always best to wait a few days post-frost to see what tissue is actually damaged. My parsley and viola plants looked awful the next day or two after the freeze, but sure enough, a few days later they looked perky as if nothing had happened. Tropicals such as bananas and elephant ears (*Colocasia*) may survive from



Frozen banana plants should be cut back to near ground level.

the roots or the trunk if the freeze was mild. Remove any dead leaves and wait a week to see if the trunks and stems begin to turn brown. If they do, remove them before they turn too mushy and rancid.

Dead leaves on woody tropicals (bougainvillea, hibiscus, croton, etc.) can be picked off but hold off on pruning to prevent further cold damage. After the warmer spring weather, you'll be better able to see

which branches and twigs are actually dead. Patience is good in this situation! If something looks dead, wait a couple months to be sure.

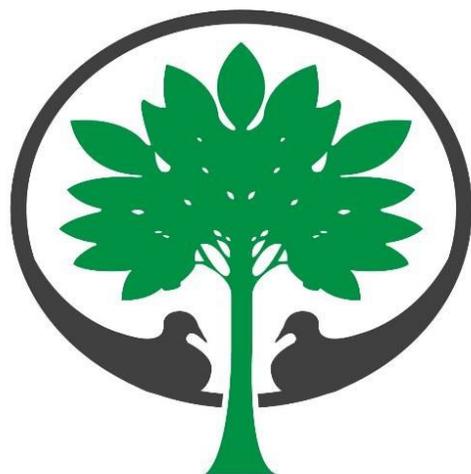
Summer annuals (impatiens, begonias, coleus, etc.) and vegetable crops (tomatoes, eggplant, peppers) probably died back unless they were covered or protected well. It is best to remove these plants completely and compost them. Use this time as a chance to spruce up the garden with some winter annuals such as violas, snapdragons, petunias, and pansies. The vegetable garden can be re-sown with cool season crops such as lettuce, radish, kale, collards, and mustard.

Your garden is in good company if it looks a little worse for wear this time of year. Patience is a good thing when it comes to pruning after a freeze, and spring is right around the corner! Waiting helps save you unnecessary work and also mistakenly removing a plant that would otherwise prosper later.

~Anna Timmerman

## Upcoming Events

### 2017 PLANT SALES



NEW ORLEANS CITY PARK  
**BOTANICAL  
GARDEN**

The Pelican Greenhouse is located just off Henry Thomas (Golf) Drive, South of the I-610 overpass. Bring a wagon and arrive early.

**MARCH 11**  
Rose Sale–Pelican Greenhouse  
9:00 a.m. - Noon

**APRIL 8-9**  
Spring Garden Show  
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

**MAY 13**  
Pelican Greenhouse  
9:00 a.m. – Noon

**JUNE 3**  
Pelican Greenhouse  
9:00 a.m. - Noon

**JULY 1**  
Pelican Greenhouse  
9:00 a.m. - Noon

**AUGUST 5**  
Pelican Greenhouse  
9:00 a.m. - Noon

**SEPTEMBER 9**  
Pelican Greenhouse  
9:00 a.m. – Noon

**OCTOBER 7-8**  
Fall Garden Festival  
10:00 a.m. – 5:00 pm

For additional information, call 504/483-9464, visit our website at [www.neworleanscitypark.com](http://www.neworleanscitypark.com), or e-mail to [plants@nocp.org](mailto:plants@nocp.org)

Plants are now available for sale in our new Garden Gift Shop



## 2017 Spring Garden Show



Saturday, April 8, 9am to 5pm  
Sunday, April 9, 10am to 4pm



Now accepting vendor registrations.

To register for a sales or educational booth at the show send us an e-mail to [GNOGardening@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:GNOGardening@agcenter.lsu.edu)

# February Checklist

Plant gladiolus corms this month through mid March. Plant groups of corms every two weeks during the planting season to extend the gladiolus display of flowers.

Plant caladium tubers indoors this month for a head start. Start tubers in flats or pots of potting soil kept evenly moist in a warm, out of the way area. They should begin to sprout in a few weeks. As the leaves appear, move the containers to a sunny window or shady area outside (if days are in the 70s and nights in the 60s). Plant caladium tubers, pre-sprouted or not, into the garden in mid April.

Onions, shallots, garlic and leeks are susceptible to an insect called thrips which causes small white marks on the foliage called stippling. Heavy infestations can damage foliage to the point that the harvest is reduced. Control thrips with Malathion.

Lettuce can be direct seeded into the garden now through the end of February. Good cultivars include Black seeded Simpson, Oakleaf, Redsails, Cos Romaine, Buttercrunch and many others.

February is the month to plant, prune, and fertilize hardy fruit trees such as apple, peach, nectarine, fig and fruit bushes such as blackberry and blueberry. Citrus are fertilized in late January or early February. Wait until March to fertilize tender fruit trees like banana, guava and avocado.

Finish harvesting any fruit still remaining on citrus trees. The fruit stores well on the tree, but ultimately the quality will begin to decline.

Clean out your pond garden or aquatic garden this month, if you need to. It is advisable to do this if there is a thick layer of gunk on the bottom. It is best to get this done while the weather is cool, the plants are dormant and the fish are less active. Pond cleaning is the best time to divide and repot water and bog plants that are dormant or semi-dormant. Do not divide those in active growth such as Louisiana irises and calla lilies

Plant rose bushes in well prepared beds with good drainage and plenty of sun. It is important for the graft union to be 2 inches above the soil of the bed. If you plant roses purchased in containers, this was taken care of by the nursery. Just plant the bush so the top of the root ball is level with the soil of the bed. In the case of bare root roses, you must see to this yourself during planting. Finish planting bare root roses by the end of February.

Remember to keep mulches pulled back at least 6 inches from the foundation of slab houses and pillars of raised houses to reduce the risk of termite infestation.

## Your Local Extension Office is Here to Help

E-mail us at: [GNOGardening@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:GNOGardening@agcenter.lsu.edu)



Follow us on Facebook at [GNOGardening](https://www.facebook.com/GNOGardening)

For more information visit [LSUAgCenter.com](http://LSUAgCenter.com)

Joe Willis  
Orleans Parish  
Horticulture Agent

(504)483-9471

Anna Timmerman  
Jefferson Parish  
Horticulture Agent

(504)736-6519